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New UC 800-Toll-free Number Aids Spanish-speaking Firestorm Victims

RIVERSIDE-(UC) AsisTel de la UC, the new phone-based information service recently launched by the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, now includes 29 concise messages about dealing with the aftermath of wildfires for people who are looking for information in Spanish. The messages are accessible via (800) 514-4494, a toll-free number. They deal with a wide range of topics, from important phone numbers, completing the insurance claim, to the health and emotional well-being of adults and children.

"Many in the fire-ravaged communities are Latino immigrants, with limited information in Spanish to help guide their recovery," said Myriam Grajales-Hall, Program Manager of the Spanish Broadcast and Media Services Unit based at UC Riverside. "We hope these phone messages will help fill the gap in a useful, easily accessible manner."

Recorded at the Spanish Broadcast and Media Services studio, the new *AsisTel de la UC* messages feature aid available through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Red Cross, the Small Business Administration (SBA), and other local, state, and federal agencies; information on insurance coverage issues, obtaining disability and unemployment insurance, as well as home repairs and warnings about scams that tend to surface in the wake of disasters.

"As part of a land-grant university, we are committed to providing information to foster the well-being of our State's economy and resources, including its families and children," Grajales-Hall noted. "We've included information to help parents support our youngest fire victims as they mourn their losses and begin the difficult recovery process."

Health concerns are also addressed in guidelines for donating food to shelters, handling food safely when facing interruptions of power, and dealing with the ever-present blanket of ash; as well as recommendations regarding exposure to smoke and how to know if one's symptoms are smoke-related.

For those still facing the possibility of an evacuation or relocating to a shelter, *AsisTel de la UC* includes information on steps that can make the process easier, as well as messages on protecting home and family from future fires.

AsisTel de la UC aims to provide useful information in Spanish to individuals, families and communities on topics of current interest. Available 24 hours a day at 1-(800)- 514-4494, it is updated on a regular basis or in response to major events, such as the devastating wildfires.

The statewide toll-free number was announced Oct. 17 as part of a media campaign to provide materials in Spanish for Diabetes Month, currently in progress. Diabetes affects 17 million people in the United States, with double the incidence in Latinos as compared to Caucasians.

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